

Testimony of Eileen M. Healy
February 27, 2015
Appropriations Public Hearing
Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS)

Do Not Eliminate Funding for CT's Independent Living Centers

My name is Eileen Healy and I live in Woodbury. Governor Malloy appointed me to the State Independent Living Council, and I am currently serving as its President. I'm writing to implore you to reject Governor Malloy's elimination of funding for Independent Living Centers (CILs) and restore funding of \$528,680.00

CT's Independent Living Centers provide essential services and advocacy for people with all types of disabilities and of all ages. The staff of the CILs is comprised of people with disabilities; that is a core tenet of both our state and federal mandate. We avoid unnecessary duplication of services by utilizing existing community programs, many of which are also facing elimination or severe reduction of state funding. People with disabilities frequently go to the CILs when everyone else says, "We can't help you with ...," because of your disability type, income level, age or even where you live.

State funding is used to support the Centers' services and infrastructure; it allows the Centers to provide cost effective programs such as Money Follows the Person, Ticket to Work, Aging and Disability Resource Centers, and Nursing Facility Diversion – ALL programs that either save the state money or create new taxpayers. Not only is transitioning elders and people with disabilities back to the community from nursing facilities the right thing to do, it also saves the state millions of dollars through the enhanced Medicaid match and in institutional care. Diversion activities seek to assist people to avoid unnecessary and expensive institutionalization; again, a significant savings to the state of Connecticut. In 2014, CILs transitioned 111 people from nursing facilities to community living and many more were prevented from ever entering a nursing facility. The savings to the state? A minimum of \$5,490,000 annually! The state spends \$528,680 to support CILs and our services and we return \$5,490,000. That's an amazing return on investment.

The unintended result of eliminating funding for CILs will be increased Medicaid and Unemployment Compensation costs, even greater reliance on costly state funded services and fewer people maximizing their independence.

During my life as a person with a disability, I have been a recipient of services and a provider of services. I firmly believe in the Independent Living tenets of self-direction, self-reliance, self-empowerment and having choices. I live "independent living" every day. I work, I have family, I'm active in my community, I pay taxes and I vote. The consequences of eliminating state funding for Independent Living Centers will increase state expenses far beyond the cost savings, and ultimately, it hurts Connecticut's children, adults and elders with disabilities.

Don't eliminate funding for CT's Independent Living Centers. Thank You,

Eileen M. Healy
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